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down in selecting the objects of his censure. But we must protest altogether against the supposition that Mr. Wyse is a fair sample of Catholic feeling or opinion. His embittered sentiments towards this country have nothing to do with his religion. They are merely the result of that fierce 'anti-Saxon' prejudice which, unfortunately, yet lingers among some few of his fellow-countrymen, he himself being an Irishman well known for the strength of his animosities. We decline, accordingly, to accept him as a representative, or to allow that Catholics in general have so little perception of facts as to pick out 'swearing and the profanation of the Sunday' as characteristic sins of England, or so little theological acquirements as to imagine that 'they go to the shambles like dogs' is a common expression in the sacred Scriptures."

The *Tablet*, which has always professed itself a believer in the miracle, inserts a letter from Mr. Wyse, in which, on the part of the Bishop of Birmingham, he announces "to those Catholics who have read the article in the *Edinburgh Review* that a full, detailed, and most satisfactory answer is now preparing for publication," and that the answer would have appeared before this but for "his lordship's" absence on the Continent, and "the necessity of direct reference to the local authorities at Grenoble, in order to supply a distinct and thorough refutation of the falsehoods contained in the *Edinburgh*."

The *Tablet* then proceeds to give its own views on the article in the *Edinburgh Review*, which consist principally in what are meant to be some very cutting and sarcastic sneers at the motives and ignorance of the reviewer, but which really resolve themselves into mere verbal criticisms and a reiteration of the assertions of the Bishop of Grenoble, and, in fact, amount to nothing, when prefaced by the following passages, which would properly, we think, have led the writer to the same conclusion at which the *Rambler* has arrived, instead of "the belief" which he professes in the truth of the apparition.

"We avow at once," says the *Tablet*, "that we possess no special knowledge in this affair. We believe in the miracle of La Salette because the evidence which has come before us in its favour vastly preponderates over the evidence against it. Being thus inclined to believe it, the episcopal mandement of the Bishop of Grenoble gives us full security that in believing it we incur no risk. We have not visited the diocese of Grenoble. We have not seen any of the French pamphlets on the subject of the apparition. We cannot test by them the statements of the reviewer. We have no means at present of knowing what M. Rousselot has to say on his part; or whether the language attributed to the Bishops of Gap, Belley, Orleans, and Mans was really used by them or not. We, therefore, await, as regards some of these points, the production of more evidence without the least distress of mind or the smallest inclination precipitately to surrender our reasonable and warranted belief. No doubt, in good time, all will be made clear."

This puts us in mind of the impartial judge, who, in referring the question of "guilty or not" to the jury, added, that "to prevent the possibility of a mistake he would just in the meantime hang the prisoner." Evidence, we should have supposed, should in the natural order have preceded the editorial belief in such a matter. But here, without any "special knowledge of the affair," without the least distress of mind, or taking the trouble of reading any of the pamphlets which have been published on one side or the other upon the very scene of the alleged miracle, this champion of truth professes his "reasonable and warranted belief" trusting that "in good time, no doubt, all will be made clear."

We confess we are influenced by a somewhat higher sense of editorial responsibility than either the editors of the *Rambler* or the *Tablet*, and have, therefore, considered it our duty to take very considerable pains, as our readers are probably aware, to make ourselves masters of the arguments published both in France and England on each side of the question, and we unhesitatingly express our conviction, and, as the *Tablet* says, "without either the least distress of mind or the smallest inclination precipitately to surrender our reasonable and warranted belief" (proved, as it has been, successively in two different courts of justice at Grenoble), that it was

Constance de Lamerlière, and not the Blessed Virgin, who appeared on the 19th September, 1846, to the peasant children on the mountain, and, consequently, (without attempting to pronounce how far any individuals, clergy or laymen, have been implicated in the fraud), that a more audacious imposture was never attempted to be foisted upon the Christian world than the miraculous Apparition of La Salette.

As, however, our readers will naturally be desirous to hear by what new proofs the opposite view is supported by the French brochure which we have mentioned, we shall just say that they principally, if not altogether, consist in a series of alleged miracles, confirmatory of the original one of September, 1846, of which the following, purporting to be taken from a sermon preached by the Rev. Father Burnoud, *Superior of the Missionaries of Notre-Dame de la Salette*, on the anniversary of the apparition, may be taken as a fair specimen:—

"It is about two months ago, in the town of L., that an old man, more than eighty years of age, an impious disciple of Voltaire, was dying, and dying with blasphemies on his lips. An angel of prayer and devotion, however, was watching over him. His pious daughter was there, fixed to his bedside of pain, watching with anxiety the frightful progress of his disease, and unceasingly praying for the conversion of her unfortunate father. But, alas! she dared not speak to him a word of religion, still less propose to him the assistance of the Church; for the name of a priest, as that of God, was enough to excite the rage of the dying man, and make him spring from his bed, uttering the most frightful imprecations. The poor girl, therefore, kept silence, and prayer was her only resource. Oh! how ardent were her petitions for her father's salvation. How she conjured Mary, the 'Comforter of the Afflicted,' to come to her aid! Suddenly she exclaimed, 'If I were to mix with my father's drink the miraculous water of your fountain, O! our Lady of la Salette, the Reconciler of sinners! Good Mother, would not thou convert it into a remedy for his soul?' And immediately she secretly pours some drops of this blessed water into the potion prescribed for her father, whilst, in her heart, she repeats many times—'O! our Lady of la Salette, the Reconciler of sinners, I trust him to thee; thou wilt save him! thou wilt save him!'"

"Monsieur A. takes the salutary draught without suspecting the pious fraud, and soon after falls into a peaceful sleep. Trembling with hope, his daughter continues to pray, prostrated at the foot of his bed, when suddenly the short sleep of the sick man is interrupted by horrible convulsions, the fatal symptoms of approaching dissolution. There is no hope. Life is ebbing. The shadows of death already gather over his countenance. A few minutes more and all will be over! 'O! our Lady of la Salette,' cries Mademoiselle A., in the most unutterable anguish, 'the Reconciler of sinners! I have confided him to thee. Save, save my father!'"

"At the same instant the dying man opened his eyes and exclaimed, 'My daughter, my daughter—a priest! quick, quick—a priest!' His daughter flies to seek a minister of God; he is soon found; he runs. Monsieur A. confesses himself with every sign of the most sincere repentance, and in a few moments regenerating grace transforms a frantic atheist into a teachable and fervent Christian!"

"My brethren, a few drops of the water drawn from this little fountain, an invocation of Our Lady of la Salette, was sufficient to effect a double prodigy. Mary willed that Monsieur A. should recover at the same time both health of mind and health of body. This good old man, whom I know intimately, consecrates the life which has been restored to him to make known the mercies of the Lord, and the power of Our Lady of la Salette. His devotion edifies his family, and all who approach him!"—p. 73-5.

What an edifying and convincing proof of the truth of La Salette and its missionaries!

No wonder that the sale of the holy water is so productive, when it produces such miraculous effects! We strongly recommend to Dr. Ullathorne its importation on a large scale into Birmingham, as the most speedy means of establishing his new confraternity. If he could only enter into an arrangement with some of the brewers or milk vendors in that great city to infuse a few glassfuls of this truly miraculous fluid into their vats and milkpails (accompanied by Mr. Wyse's fervent prayers to the Virgin for her patronage) the business would be done, and that without the converts ever being the wiser of it, or the least aware of the cause of their conversion.

We wonder what the editor of the *Rambler* would say to Father Burnoud's veracity (if he would condescend to take the trouble of reading such a production), or whether it would assist him in coming to a "strong conviction one way or other," if he found the *Superior of the Missionaries of La Salette* publicly preaching what, without any breach of true Christian charity, we think we may call, and we have no doubt the able writer in the *Rambler* would himself consider, such revolting and incredible nonsense.

WHAT PEOPLE SAY OF THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

Terence O'Sullivan.—I have been thinking, Jerry, a power since we met last, about what we was talking about on the road home from Knocklong, on Monday was a week, and sorra a bit can I make up my mind to think what you was telling me about them that writes the CATHOLIC LAYMAN newspaper, which you and I have been getting for the last six months, without my knowing who on earth thinks it worth while to send it to the forge for the likes of me, without charge or payment.

J. Driscoll.—Well, then, Terry, to say God's truth, I am not sure or sartin in my own mind on that matter. It isn't that I'd put it past such black heretics to tell, or print either, any lies whatsoever that they thought they couldn't be found out in; but what makes me in dread that they're right is, when I see they print the very pages of the books where they take their proofs from; and how would they venture to do that, if they were afraid of having their rogues found out? Sure enough, they know that the likes of us has no mains of looking at the books, and showing up that their quotations is wrong; but, sure there's lots of priests who could do it in a minute, and I'm thinking it's they that wouldn't be slow to do it, if the passages wasn't to be found where the LAYMAN says they are.

Terence O'S.—I was just thinking the same when I was in Father O'Donovan's front parlour the other day, and saw the very same big books there that them chaps in the LAYMAN are always a quotin'. I longed to say to him, only I durstn't, that there was more than me that wished his reverence would either ask the bishop to print a rale Catholic paper, to show up the LAYMAN for telling lies, if they be lies, or just do it himself for the good of the boys that is for ever reading it, in spite of all the bishops and priests can say to the contrary.

J. Driscoll.—Well, then, entroth, Terry, I mis-doubt if their riverences will ever do the like of that, whatever happens; for sure and sartin that same has been talked of over and over again, and nothin' ever done upon it. Sure, man, it stands to reason that they wouldn't have waited for over five long years and let such a paper as that go ram-paging about the country in thousands upon thousands and take no steps to stop it, only they're afraid of doing more harm than good by trying their hand at it—the boys being, as they know, so fond of the controversy if they'd only be let, and so mighty 'cute at understanding it when they get a chance.

Terence O'S.—You're wrong now, Jerry, at any rate; for it's not true that they take no steps to stop it, for sure enough didn't Father O'Donovan himself go riding round the whole parish when first it came down there, and ordering every one not to read it, but to give it up to him, to carry away and burn it? and didn't he afterwards, when he got tired of the riding, spake agin it openly at the chapel, and threaten with this and with that every one who read such a vile, blasphemous, lying paper, that was full of nothing but insults to our holy religion, and bad language, and abuse of every good Catholic that attends to his duty and minds what the priests says to him.

J. Driscoll.—To tell you the truth, Terry, it's that very cursing in the chapel, and out of it, that made me first wishful to read it for myself, just to see what it was all about, and whether what Father O'Donovan and the other priests says of it was true or not; and it's not true, anyhow, that the LAYMAN does use bad language or abuse, and the priests knows right well that they're telling lies themselves when they say that it does; and then, isn't it natural enough that when I see plain that the priests is telling lies about the abuse that they say is in it, that I should have a misgiving as to their telling lies, too, about the LAYMAN giving false quotations from St. Augustin and the rest of the holy fathers, that they're for ever quotin' so glib, as if they had them all at their fingers' end from cover to cover.

Terence O'S.—That's just what Andy Walker, the schoolmaster, says too; for I was askin' him the other day about whether the texts in the LAYMAN was really in the Douay Bible, that they say they take out of it; or whether that is all a flam to misguide people who don't know the differ; and Andy says it's true enough, that it's all word for word taken from our own Bible; for he has ever and always compared the texts himself in the hopes of finding them out, and writin' a letter to the *Nation* or *Telegraph* about it, if he could find them out foisting in their own Bible instead of the true Douay; but by this and by that, says he, I never could catch them yet; though it's he would be glad to show them up if he could find them misquoting it.

Jerry D.—And who does Andy Walker think it is that writes the LAYMAN? Does he believe it is one of them degraded priests that's been disgraced by their bishop, and put away out of the holy Catholic Church for their bad conduct, as Father O'Donovan told the boys when he bid them give up the papers to himself?

Terence O'S.—Well, then, Jerry, I'm thinking that Father O'Donovan knew very well that that was a lie, for didn't I see him a readin' on it himself, on the sly, more than wunst, and do ye think he'd be doing that if he thought it was wrote by a man that's a disgrace to the Church and the clergy?

Jerry D.—And who does Andy Walker allow writes it?

Terence O'S.—Why, Andy says he knows very well that it's no less than the Protestant bishop in Stephen's-green as writes every word of it from end to end; and Andy says he's a mighty larned and cute man, who comed over from Oxford to teach the parsons how to argue logic, and that he only purtends to be a layman, the better to get Catholics to attend to what he has to say for himself and his religion.

Jerry D.—By dad, and if that's true, anyhow, sure it's only the greater shame for the true Archbishop that's in Dublin, Archbishop Cullen, that writes such beautiful pastoral letters about St. Patrick and the rascally proselyters, not to expose him for telling so many lies, as the priests says in the paper. Sure that's the very man it would do every true Catholic's heart good to see shown up as a liar and an impostor, instead of slinking away, and purtending that the LAYMAN, whoever writes it, is a paper not worth noticing.

Terence O'S.—Well, indeed, then, Jerry, I don't believe one word that the reason the CATHOLIC LAYMAN is not exposed by Archbishop Cullen and the priests is because they don't think it worth while; for, sure enough, there is such a powerful lot of them papers a-going in the country, in spite of all the priests and bishops can do or say to the contrary, that there never was anything that done either so much harm or so much good as it is every day doing, just according to whether it tells truth or lies; and the worst of it is, that no one that reads it but learns more than ever he knew before of his religion as well as of what is to be said on both sides; and, for my part, I never read a line of it but I can't help for the life of me thinking that it's mighty like truth, and that if any of it is lies after all, it's mighty hard to make out what is true and what is lies. And I tell you what, Jerry, I do believe in my heart that it's the priests that's telling the lies and not the writers in the LAYMAN, which is just the civillest and best-spoken newspaper that ever I came across, whether it's written by a layman or a Protestant bishop, or whomsoever is the writer of it.

J. Driscoll.—You're not far out there, any how, I'm thinking, Terry; and as we have come to spake so freely together, I'll just say what has often come into my head as to what could make a Protestant bishop spend his money in sending about the paper to the likes of you or me, or Andy Walker either, and takin' such a deal of trouble in writin' of it, month after month, for more nor five years right on end, unless he really wished to do us good and was sure his religion was the true one. What good would it do the Protestant bishops or parsons if all Ireland was Protestant to-morrow? though no one can believe that they expect to get half the Catholics over while there's so many things to prevent them changing, if they were ever so sure that the Protestants are right. Sure the bishops and parsons wouldn't be a bit richer or better off than they are already, and they'd have a dale more trouble with the people than they have now. Andy Walker says he wunst heard a parson who was very comfortable, and had next to nothing to do in his parish for want of people to go to the church, say he'd be right sorry the people gave up the chapel and came over to his way, as he'd have nothing but trouble and heart-scalding, and begging at him from week's end to week's end, and he'd have neither rest nor peace if he didn't keep two or three curates to do the work for him.

Terence O'S.—True for him, Jerry; and I'm sure there's a dale of parsons in the same way of thinking, and that's the reason maybe that some of them fights so shy of the LAYMAN themselves. It's different, to be sure, in our Church, because, you see, every family as goes over to the parson is a great loss, be them never so poor, to the parish priest, who gets paid by the people voluntary, and who would get nothing if they went away; and sure isn't that the reason that Father O'Donovan and the rest of the priests is ever and always agin any of the boys going to America, because they'd lose their dues, and no mistake, by their going away, however rich the boys themselves or their friends may get by going there.

J. Driscoll.—Well, then, Terry, my mind is, that the best chance we have of getting at God's truth is just to do what the CATHOLIC LAYMAN advises us—to buy a Douay Bible and read it quietly to ourselves, and just see and make out whether God has said in it that there's purgatory as well as hell, and whether He says in it that the priests can get us or our friends out of purgatory, no matter what we pay for it; and whether it is written in it that every Christian ought to confess everything he thinks and does to the priest; and if I can't find purgatory, or prayers to the Blessed Virgin in the Bible, I'll make bold just to think that the LAYMAN is in the right, and not telling lies

after all, whatever Father O'Donovan or any one else may say to the contrary; and I'll be glad if you would buy a Bible or a Testament yourself, Terry, and then we'd be able to help one another in searching it out; for I'll never be aisy, now my mind is up about it, till I get to the bottom of it—whether it's the priest or whether it's the CATHOLIC LAYMAN that's telling the lies!

Correspondence.

"EGO ABSOLVO TE."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

SIR,—I beg leave to make a few observations in answer to the article on confession, headed "Ego absolvo te," which appeared in your periodical of last month. The following are a few extracts from said article, viz.:—

"In our last number we gave the forms of absolution used in the Greek Church for twelve hundred years and more from the time of Christ. We showed that all those forms consisted in praying to God for the pardon of sin, as that which He alone could give."

You then quote forms of prayer from the sacramentary of Pope Gelasius, and continue:—"In these prayers the priest does not attempt to say 'I absolve thee'; he only prays to God that God Himself will remit the sins of the penitent, as if that were a work which God alone could do, and which priests could only pray for."

And again you say, "Here"—at the reconciliation of a penitent at death—"at least, we should expect that the highest power of the priest in forgiving sins should be exercised. Yet here, as well as everywhere else, the priest's office is executed only in prayer to God, that He will pardon sin; but without any trace of the words 'I absolve thee.'"

And you finally wind up with, "Those awful words for man to speak in respect of sin against God, 'I absolve thee,' were never spoken by man on earth." C. L., August, 1857.

Now, in sober earnestness, I ask you, as the champion of the Church of England in Ireland, how can you reconcile these statements and assertions with the doctrine and practice of your Church on this question? Do not the priests, or rather ministers, of the Established Church, sir, unequivocally claim and exercise the power of forgiving mortal man his sins against God and his neighbour, as is evident to any man of common sense who reads the authorised prayer-book? To prove my assertion, I proceed to give a quotation or two from this book, as follows, viz.:—

"And because it is requisite that no man should come to the holy communion but with a full trust in God's mercy, and with a quiet conscience; therefore, if there be any of you who, by this means, cannot quiet his own conscience herein, but requireth further comfort or counsel, let him come to me or to some other discreet and learned minister of God's word, and open his grief (that means, Catholic readers, make his confession), that by the ministry of God's holy word he may receive the benefit of ABSOLUTION, together with ghostly counsel and advice," &c.—(Minister's exhortation.)

Another quotation—"Here shall the sick person be moved to make a special confession (take a note of that, Roman Catholics) of his sins, if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter; after which confession, the priest shall absolve him after this sort—Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to His Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in Him, of His great mercy forgive thee thine offences; and by His authority committed to me, I absolve thee (aye, aye) from all thy sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."—(Order for the visitation of the sick.)

Now, Mr. Editor, I humbly venture to think that there is something more in this than praying to God to forgive the sins of the penitent; and if our priests are wrong, if it is awful, frightful, as you say, for them to repeat, "I absolve thee," it must be equally so for your ministers. A Protestant, especially an educated one, should be the last person in the world to denounce the holy scripture institution of confession; for this reason, that it is the doctrine of his own Church, and which she has held, with jealous care, since her first foundation in the sixteenth century. In the last quotation given above from the Book of Common Prayer your minister does not say to the penitent, may Almighty God forgive thee thy sins: no, but he says, I, I absolve thee from all thy sins; which are the very words our priests say. Confession, then, is the doctrine of the Protestant Church, and I defy you to deny it if you admit the prayer-book. I will resume this subject in my next letter.

I am, &c., &c.,

WILLIAM ROURKE.

[We have also received a letter from "A True Protestant," which we do not think it necessary to publish, as the question is so fully raised by Mr. Rourke.]

In writing our articles on "Ego absolvo te" we were not ignorant of the fact to which your attention is now called; but as honest inquirers after truth we investigated the antiquity of the form, regardless of the effect of our search on this Church or on that. We are not of those who shun finding truth for fear of its effects.

We are ready to consider how the two Churches are affected by the fact we have proved—taking for our guide this principle, that the doctrines of a Church are essential; its forms non-essential.

We will first observe on the respective positions of Mr. Rourke and ourselves as inquirers after truth.

Mr. Rourke appears to have thought that the fact that the words "Ego absolvo te" are found in the prayer-book of the Church of England and Ireland should have stopped our mouths, and prevented our telling plain and undeniable truths about those words.

We might have hoped that our Roman Catholic readers would have known us better by this time. We might have hoped that our uniform profession, supported by our uniform conduct, would have led to the conviction that in matters which concern the truth of religion, the salvation of souls, and the pardon of sin, we will speak truth and proclaim facts.

It is a clear and certain fact, which Mr. Rourke does not attempt to deny, that the words "Ego absolvo te" were never used in the Church of Christ for 1200 years. Why should we not proclaim such a fact as this? Is it because the words are found in our prayer-book? That does not make the fact less certain, nor does it involve any obligation on us to conceal it.

Mr. Rourke is taught by his Church that he must not speak what he believes to be true if she disapproves of it—that he must profess what he does not believe to be true if she requires it. But our Church does not seek to impose any such obligation upon us.

We do not impute a slavish spirit of subjection to Mr. Rourke or to individual Roman Catholics. We know that many Roman Catholics have spoken historical truth boldly, even when at variance with the practice of their Church. We trust yet to see Mr. Rourke do the same. We invite him now to declare that as a matter of historical truth it is clearly proved that the words "Ego absolvo te" were never used in the Church of Rome itself for 1200 years. The fact he cannot deny: why should he not frankly acknowledge it? Let him learn to speak truth as we do, and then we will count him a worthy antagonist, and hope to elicit truth in discussion with him.

But while we acknowledge that many individual Roman Catholics have taken this noble course of speaking truth, we know that there is nothing the Church of Rome so much desires to repress as the speaking or acknowledging of such truths by her members—a sad course for a professing Christian Church to be engaged in, and one which testifies heavily against her.

Mr. Rourke must now feel that *this is true*. He must feel that it is impossible to deny the fact we have stated, that the words "Ego absolvo te" were never used in his Church for 1200 years, and that the words are, therefore, a modern invention of man. And Mr. Rourke must also feel that if he were now to acknowledge this undeniable truth, his candid regard for truth would be regarded with feelings of indignant rage by his priests, his bishops, and his Church.

We make the greatest allowance and feel the greatest sympathy for Mr. Rourke, in his difficult position. God grant and enable him and us to speak truth boldly. We feel for him all the more because our position is free from his difficulties. Our Church has taught us to speak the truth and fear not. We follow her teaching in so doing. In proclaiming the fact that the words "Ego absolvo te" were never used in the Church of Christ for 1200 years, we are performing, and not violating, the duty which our Church enjoins on us.

With respect to the form of absolution in the service for the visitation of the sick, we must distinguish between the doctrine of a Church, and the form of words in which it may be expressed. We believe that the doctrine of the Church of England is sound: we think that in this instance she has retained words ill suited to express it, and liable to be greatly misunderstood. We think that a form of words invented for the first time in the thirteenth century is unsuited to a Church reformed on the primitive model. We, therefore, think that it would have been wiser in our Reformers to have omitted or altered these words. But we find some excuse for them in the fact that the ancient forms, by which we have proved the novelty of the form, had not then been published.

But moral guilt or innocence does not consist in the form of words we use, but in our meaning. Notwithstanding that the prayer-book does contain the words "I absolve thee," still the doctrine of the Church of England and Ireland and the doctrine of the Church of Rome, about the priest's power of forgiving sin, are essentially opposed.

The Church of Rome teaches that it is impossible to be saved unless we get a priest to say over us, "Ego absolvo te;" or, if it be impossible to get the priest, it is, at least, necessary to wish for him.

The Church of England teaches that any sinner who repents and flees to Christ for refuge may immediately obtain the pardon of all his sins from Christ alone, without any other priest, and that the words of the minister are not in any sense necessary to the pardon of sin.

The Book of Common Prayer contains two other forms of absolution, intended for general and constant use—